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AUTHOR McCoy, Mary Helen S.
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines qualities of effective school leadership that are critical to successful educational change. The first part explores various definitions of leadership, discusses the concept of leadership versus management, and describes the challenges that school leaders face. The paper then draws on data collected from interviews with four experienced and recognized school leaders to highlight the critical issues for educational leadership today. Several factors that foster the effective leadership necessary to adaptive educational change are identified. The leaders utilized a team approach to school leadership; balanced management skills with visionary leadership; and strove to minimize bureaucratic and other structural constraints. They reported that educational change was hampered by a lack of participative decision making, team leadership, professional development, and teacher empowerment. Time constraints, parental apathy, and external social problems were also major barriers. One table is included. Contains 21 references. (LMI)

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Leadership: Perspectives from Practice

Mary Helen S. McCoy

Louisiana State University

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LEADERSHIP: PERSPECTIVES FROM PRACTICE

For over two decades, the American education reform movement has involved both researchers and practitioners in the search to identify elements needed for successful change. Among the many subjects explored in the growing body of reform literature is the area of effective leadership, which Schlechty (1990) believes to be the key to school reform.

This study will consider aspects of leadership, first laying a groundwork from literature by exploring definitions, leadership versus management, and challenges school leaders face. Then leadership will be considered in terms of perspectives from educational practice by highlighting the critical issues for educational leadership today.

Overview of Leadership

As a concept, leadership can be elusive. Many scholars have attempted to frame it in words, often in terms of a relationship among individuals within an organization, between leaders and their constituents (Burns, 1978; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Guthrie & Reed, 1991; Lezotte, 1994; Mitchell & Tucker, 1992; Slezak, 1984). Some indicate the need for clearly establishing a vision prior to setting performance standards and then motivating and inspiring others to embrace the vision in order to make a leader's dream come true (Barth, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 1991, 1994; Guthrie & Reed, 1991; Leithwood, 1992; Schlechty, 1990). Lezotte (1994) points to the successful leader's quest for change as being more dependent upon follower commitment than upon leader

authority, as exemplified in the give and take of motivating others to buy into a vision which then can be modified when followers contribute their own ideas.

Indicating that leadership is special, Slezak (1984) describes a leader as one who "energizes the system, generates the magic that makes everyone want to do something extra, and exhibits the optimism it takes for progress to occur" (p. 3). Murphy (1988) thinks a leader acts as a catalyst--guiding, interpreting, and stimulating engagement (p. 656). But perhaps the most comprehensive definition is offered by Burns (1978):

> Leadership is leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations--the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations--of both leaders and followers. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations. (p. 19)

One could conclude from the above discussion that effective leadership is not an ordinary thing. It takes a combination of qualities and skills which can only be considered quite special: Foresight in establishing a vision, along with ability to clearly articulate that vision; charisma in attracting, motivating, and inspiring others to follow; competence in ably approaching tasks at hand; integrity in setting a good example; commitment and energy in relentlessly pursuing what it takes for progress to occur; and genius in weaving it all together to accomplish the desired change.

Leadership Versus Management

Current reform literature distinguishes between management and leadership. According to Lewis (1993), some researchers think "well-functioning schools may not need leaders as much as they need managers; others contend that leadership is essential, especially regarding instruction" (p. 16). Bolman and Deal (1991) express the hope that their book "will inspire both inventive management and wise leadership" (p. 446) and offer further evidence of the autonomous nature of the two functions:

> Leading and managing are distinct, but both are important. Organizations that are overmanaged but underled eventually lose any sense of spirit or purpose. Poorly managed organizations with strong charismatic leaders may soar temporarily only to crash shortly thereafter. The challenges of modern organizations require the objective perspective of the manager as well as the brilliant flashes of vision and commitment that wise leadership provides. (p. xiii)

Bolman and Deal (1994) note that managers are concerned with keeping a good system running well, while leaders are concerned with figuring out how to change a system when it is no longer a good system. "Management provides consistency, control, and efficiency. But leadership is needed to foster purpose, passion, and imagination" (p. 77). Whereas managers maintain the status quo, leaders must take an organization in a new direction. In other words, major adaptive change calls for leadership.

Several other dimensions clearly separate leadership and management. Perhaps the most obvious is the time frame involved. Leaders by necessity must think long-term in setting a vision and planning for the future, whereas managers operate on a more short-term basis in providing for day-to-day survival. A second area of difference is the scope of operation. Managers are concerned mainly with the immediate operational arena, but leaders exist in a larger world and "influence people beyond their immediate jurisdiction, emphasize vision, encourage renewal, and possess the political skills to deal with multiple constituencies" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 407). As a third distinguishing feature, leadership is more people-oriented while management is more task-oriented (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Hooper, 1992; Rallis & Highsmith, 1987; Slezak, 1984).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

School administrators find themselves in a dual position of being both managers and leaders. Basic managerial ability is required to direct fiscal and human resources toward fulfillment of organizational goals. But administrative leadership is needed for vision, to insure a good educational environment, and to motivate others to strive toward accomplishing goals. Leadership is particularly critical when a school's social and cultural support is weak, and it is necessary to nurture interpersonal relationships in order to change attitudes and beliefs (Bolman &

Deal, 1994; Glatthorn, 1990; Guthrie & Reed, 1991; Hooper, 1992; Mitchell & Tucker, 1992; Rallis & Highsmith, 1987).

One must question if it is practical to expect principals to perform two such different roles requiring such diverse skills. "School administrators are expected to provide leadership in important educational endeavors such as organizational planning, guiding instruction, implementing curricular changes, goal setting, and evaluating personnel while simultaneously managing concrete activities such as transportation, facilities, maintenance, and food service" (Guthrie & Reed, 1991, p. 229). Often, authority figures by necessity must focus more on maintaining stability and order than on exercising effective leadership. According to Rallis and Highsmith (1987), a "leader can empower," but a "manager must enable" (p. 303), and unless some other provision is made for handling full-time management problems, instructional leadership effectiveness is compromised.

One solution to the educational administrator's leadership and management dilemma is that those who stay busy managing everyday crises learn to utilize leadership ability of others in the organization. For example, a principal could relinquish appropriate instructional decisions to the experts who are engaged in the instructional task--the teachers, who then become the leaders in this area (Barth, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 1994; Leithwood, 1992; Rallis, 1988; Rallis & Highsmith, 1987; Schlechty, 1990; Wasley, 1991). Another real possibility lies in utilizing available personnel or hiring additional personnel for management functions in order to free the administrator for

leadership purposes. These options necessarily pose the question of organizational authority structure and other factors which could limit or encourage others to assume effective leadership and/or management roles.

Challenges School Leaders Face

The scope and complexity of educational administrators' performance functions have expanded over time. To truly appreciate the challenges today's school leaders face, one must examine just what it is that they are actually expected to do. Guthrie and Reed (1991) provide a detailed job description:

> Much of the site administrator's time is spent engaged in important but fundamentally noninstructional activities: supervising students between classes in the hallways, at lunch, at various extracurricular events, before and after school, during bus loading and unloading; responding to parental and community concerns; preparing reports and responding to central office requests; resolving conflicts between students, between students and teachers; handling student discipline; requiring and distributing teacher resources; scheduling classes and other school activities; supervising staff; meeting with individual and small groups of students, teachers, and parents; and responding to any number of unexpected school emergencies that may arise during the school day. Activities that are more clearly within the purview of

> instructional leadership, such as teacher supervision, classroom observation, curriculum development and evaluation, and instructional support and technical assistance for teachers, generally have not represented significant portions of the site administrator's day. The crucial instructional leadership role of the site administrator is mitigated by routine and managerial responsibilities. (p. 232)

Additionally, today's school principal is expected to build community support for the educational program, justify many school decisions, and obtain needed fiscal and human resources. The principals must also practice increased internal leadership to help develop within organizational members the ability to formulate their own solutions for local concerns. A principal is now expected to assume a vibrant and proactive leadership role, as reform literature urges for periods of rapid change and crisis. In effect, principals are expected "to undergo a metamorphosis, to change from transactional to transformational leaders" (Murphy & Hallinger, 1992, p. 81).

Other problems challenge educators at all levels. Many people in education feel that lack of time is their greatest obstacle to adequate job performance (Lieberman, 1992; Slezak, 1984). Many schools and school systems are controlled by complex bureaucracies which allow educators very little latitude in decision making (Rallis & Highsmith, 1987). And Murphy (1988) notes that many employees have come to "typically view the top administrator as the chief problem solver" (p. 659), a most

unenviable position for the school leader whose time is already severely compromised.

Today there is a "demand that we find success where before it was optional" in terms of achieving learning for all students (Lezotte, 1994, p. 23). Also complicating the educational horizon are deteriorating societal values and priorities which increasingly leave it up to schools to provide not only for academic needs of students but also for values education, discipline, nurturing, and nutritional needs (Bolman & Deal, 1994). Hodgkinson (1985) described significant numbers of schoolchildren as residing in single-parent and/or low-income homes, having undereducated parents, and being illegitimate, handicapped, English-deficient, and "latchkey" children. Over time, the situation has deteriorated, and today's human organizations must necessarily rise to meet the complex challenges that are present (Bolman & Deal, 1994).

Educational reform literature marks school leadership as a multi-faceted and considerable undertaking. Are school leaders in today's schools reflective of literature? This study focuses on the experiences of leaders identified as outstanding in the school setting. It examines their perception of the leadership role, relates experiences in the quest for school change, and identifies factors promoting success or challenging success. By comparing literature on effective leadership with the reality of practice, the present study highlights critical issues in educational leadership today.

Method

Setting and Participants

The current study involved collection of qualitative interview data from four participants who hold school leadership positions. A purposive sampling design (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) was used to select participants who would bring diversity to the study as a result of their employment location. Thus, information was obtained which reflects conditions in public, private, and parochial schools. In addition, to qualify for selection, each participant had to have at least 15 years of experience in education and previous recognition as a distinguished practitioner. All participants work at schools in a southern state and are referred to by pseudonym.

Ms. Jones is principal of a large, suburban, public elementary school. In this capacity, she is actively engaged in site-based management and locational budgeting. Previously, she was previously honored as a state teacher of the year. Since her appointment as a principal nine years ago, she has received national recognition as a recipient of the John F. Kennedy Center School Administrator's Award. Ms. Jones is not only a frequent presenter at state and national meetings, but also has been selected by the district for involvement as a mentor in a district internship program for prospective principals.

The second participant, Mr. Smith, earned his Ph.D. in education and is currently department chair and mathematics instructor in a laboratory school at a major state university. As is often true of such schools, instructional leadership at

this school is vested primarily in the faculty. Mr. Smith is also a faculty member in the university's teacher preparation program where he teaches a course in management, planning, and evaluation. In each of these positions he engages in shared decision-making, usually through committees, and in cooperative teaching and leadership. A past president of the National Association of Laboratory Schools, he currently serves as a board member and as an editor of its official publication.

Ms. Black, the third participant, also has a Ph.D. in education and currently is principal of a large parochial elementary school in a rural area. Previously, she served as state director of higher education and teacher certification. Named an outstanding diocesan school principal and a National Catholic Education Association Distinguished Principal, she actively promotes individual and team leadership opportunities, shared decision-making, freedom to experiment in teaching methodologies, teacher empowerment, and cooperative teaching. Additionally, she serves on several diocesan policy committees.

The fourth participant, Ms. Brown, has a range of experience which includes teaching in a number of states, thus giving her a broader frame of reference from which to consider educational issues. She has been active in cooperative teaching, as an instructional supervisor, and as a mentor. Certified in three instructional areas as well as in administration and supervision, Ms. Brown is presently an administrative intern in a large public school district.

Data Gathering and Analysis Procedures

Data were gathered through a semi-structured interview process using a protocol that focused on five questions: (1) What is your concept of educational leadership? (2) What factors are most important to effective educational leadership? (3) What factors are most detrimental to effective educational leadership? (4) What are the critical issues in educational leadership today? (5) Who should actively lead in education?

All interviews occurred over a three-week period. Each participant was interviewed once for a period that ranged between 30 and 70 minutes. Participants were encouraged to respond in whatever manner they felt appropriate. Probes to gain additional detail were used. The interviewer took notes and read back all responses for clarification and accuracy, with participants urged to add to or delete information at will.

Analysis Procedure

All interview notes were transcribed verbatim resulting in nine single-spaced, typewritten pages. Data analysis occurred in two phases. All interview transcriptions were first analyzed to identify commonalities and differences in responses among practitioners. Significant words, phrases, and ideas were extracted, providing 105 pieces of data. These data items were then reviewed iteratively and sorted into over-arching themes which are discussed below.

Results

Three themes emerged from the data. The first theme involved a team approach to school leadership. In this vein, shared decision-making was an element cited by all participants as critical to effective leadership. One respondent cited the necessity for building on all resources, particularly human resources since "a leader is only one person, whereas a staff is many people". In agreement with Leithwood (1992), Murphy and Hallinger (1992), Schlechty (1990), Slezak (1984), and Wasley (1991), respondents also unanimously cited teacher empowerment as essential in that it usually leads to teacher satisfaction and thus to increased school productivity.

Participants agreed that a school team was melded together through the vision and goals held by the leader, but adapted to the circumstances present within the school. Through these mechanisms, interviewees felt that leaders are able to establish a culture that enables the organization to fulfill its missions. In this vein, one participant specified that an organizational climate "full of trust and ethics" was essential. All respondents indicated that leadership should be facilitative, with one highlighting the need for "tact, diplomacy, and charisma to pull others together for decisions." Establishment of authentic leadership through expertise and credibility, recognition of professionalism in all teachers, and an environment which allows the freedom to take risks were also cited as factors that led to leader effectiveness in creating a team.

Participants agreed that shared leadership is the best answer for active leadership in education, indicating agreement with Barth (1988), Leiberman (1992), Leithwood (1992), Lezotte (1994), Rallis (1988), and Schlechty (1990). Statements were made such as "There's a need for teacher leaders and student leaders and community leaders who must all work together with administrators in order to effect change." Further affirming respondents' support of diffused and facilitative leadership was this response: "A good administrator will establish a cooperative learning environment, and every classroom teacher can lead in a cooperative leadership situation". Another reply supportive of expanded leadership and empowerment was this reply: "Administrators must cultivate the leaders who are willing to take the lead. Administrators cannot be worried about power and territory, but must be more concerned with the organization's power." Participants tempered responses by adding that emergency situations may limit shared decision-making possibilities, indicating that time factors must be taken into consideration.

The second theme which emerged from the data concerned management versus leadership. Indicating a sensitivity to the proposition that leadership is critically needed for adaptive change, three participants pointed to a need for balance between managing and leading. As one respondent commented, "If all one does is manage, one will not lead." This comment is consonant with leadership literature distinguishing between management and leadership. As Bolman and Deal (1994) and others (Glatthorn, 1990; Hooper, 1992) indicate, management promotes efficiency

while leadership promotes effectiveness, and leadership is the quality needed to effect change.

Participants collectively cited other factors which promote leadership needed for adaptive change. These included individual characteristics such as leading by example and showing care, concern, empathy, friendliness, a sense of humor, open-mindedness, honesty, integrity, resourcefulness, and conflict-resolution ability. This conforms to reform literature recognizing intangible human qualities as important factors for effective leadership (Bolman & Deal, 1994). Other responses included consistent follow-up, celebration of successes, and a cooperative atmosphere.

One of the questions specifically asked of respondents generated data on the third theme which emerged--obstacles to effective leadership. Participants unanimously cited the lack of shared decision-making, team leadership, professional development, and teacher empowerment as being detrimental to effective leadership. They collectively considered autocracy, negativity, favoritism of any kind, cliques, and underhanded criticism within the organization as serious impediments. Leader characteristics such as sarcasm, aloofness, unprofessionalism, elitism, and inaccessibility were also cited as damaging. One respondent indicated that leadership which shows "superficial interest in faculty input with no follow-up" significantly undermines success. Another participant termed this "lip service" and added that "teachers need authentic decision-making power."

Several factors were unanimously named by respondents as impediments to effective leadership today. Insufficient time for planning, collaboration, and reflection as well as too little interactive leadership time due to "overwhelming management duties" were specifically cited. Teachers in their schools evidence a willingness to engage in shared decision-making and other interactive leadership activities, but often do not have enough release time. Lieberman (1992) shares the belief that lack of flexible time is critically limiting to leadership effectiveness. Collectively, respondents also cited a general student and parent apathy toward education, failure of parents to back the authority of teachers, and little or no sense of school community as impediments to effective leadership.

Today's societal problems also pose serious challenges for educational leaders, creating heavy demands for schools to address health and nurturing needs, learning problems, values education, and other issues. Collectively, responses pointed to increased violence, drugs, threats of litigation, demographic factors, and student behaviorial problems as real areas of concern. This coincides with beliefs of Bolman and Deal (1994), Hodgkinson (1985), and Lezotte (1994) that today's educational leaders must confront monumental challenges.

Respondents indicated that in many instances, bureaucratic constraints stem from a political environment that makes elected school officials less responsive to educational professionals' judgments and more responsive to doing what is politically expedient for reelection. At this time there is little or no

deviation allowed from the state-mandated number of minutes of instructional time per day and per year and the district-set time limits for a school day. District transportation scheduling policies also interfere with individual school plans to address unique needs.

Discussion

The present study examined current leadership themes generated through interviews with four practicing educational leaders. Responses clearly indicate that participants are aware of the need for change and are engaged in implementing many of the current educational reform initatives in their organizations.

These data indicate that participants are cognizant of the current reform literature and that actual practice is closely aligned with the literature on effective leadership. Responses indicate change is on-going and that leadership, particularly instructional leadership, is often determined by situations or circumstances. Participants support a leadership style that has alternately been called facilitative, transformational, expanded, and shared. Within the limits of their school's particular time frame, these leaders facilitated teacher engagement in individual, committee, and team leadership activities. They expressed frustration with the fact that while teachers are usually willing to engage in team leadership at a school, in many cases there simply is not enough time.

Due to the current structure of the educational business, participants confront real limitations and have a sense that

until the structure is altered from the top down, some possibilities for change will be constrained. All four participants cited leadership frustrations in trying to professionalize practice while operating within a bureaucracy. Lack of time for reflection, collaboration, sharing, and leadership among professionals remains the most frustrating problem in their organizations. Too many administrative duties and pressing management problems (such as impromptu parent conferences, meetings about troubled students, and emergencies) rob both administrators and teachers of critical leadership time.

According to participants, a school day is full of intrusions. They and the teachers need more interactive time in order to better serve constituent needs. In addition, upper-level policies prevent restructuring the school day to provide more "release time" so that ancillary staff can meet with grade level committees, teachers can interact on a regular basis, professional development activities can occur, and parents and community can be involved in planning. In this regard, one administrator described a faculty-generated plan to begin school six minutes early each day so that once every month the faculty could use an afternoon for critical planning sessions. This proposal was denied at the district level due to unwillingness to consider altering bus routes. Similarly, two participants told of constraints imposed by court-ordered busing which impeded parental involvement, and caused transportation logistics that seriously limited flexible time possibilities. Frustrations such as this take a toll on teacher enthusiasm as well as on physical

possibilities for shared leadership. For these participants, the bureaucracy continues to demand that all schools appear to be as alike as possible on many fronts. This seriously constrains individual school site efforts to address unique needs.

Participants indicated they are dedicated to change to better serve the needs of their students, who remain their primary concern. They are innovative in approaching adaptations to address emotional and societal problems which students bring with them to school, with one site-budgeted school hiring its own staff social worker to perform counseling and training functions both at school and at home for troubled students and their families. It appears from this study that leaders who desire to be effective and who know how to be effective are prevented in some cases from being effective due to bureaucratic constraints.

For many years, administrators and teachers have been innovative in getting by with limited resources. Today, increased societal problems along with other demands upon seriously compromised resources may be dictating that more personnel, materials, staff development opportunities, and flexible time are needed by professionals in order to properly do a job which gets more and more complicated each year. If young people are truly tomorrow's treasure, then more attention must be paid today to the needs of the dedicated professionals who are trying to ensure their future.

In this study, interface between educational practice and reform literature points to several factors which foster the leadership effectiveness necessary for adaptive change. First, a

cooperative atmosphere encourages effective leadership through shared decision-making and wise use of resources. Second, today's educational leader must balance management skill with visionary, charismatic, and professional leadership in order to effect change. Finally, bureaucratic and other constraints upon leadership must be minimized in order for effectiveness to be maximized.

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TABLE 1

MANAGEMENT	versus	LEADERSHIP
Enables	-----	Empowers
Task-Oriented	-----	People-Oriented
Promotes Efficiency	-----	Promotes Effectiveness
Day-to-Day Survival	-----	Plans for the Future
Keeps a good system running well	-----	Changes a system when no longer a good one
Pertains to immediate Operational Area	-----	Pertains to Existing in a Larger World
Deals Mainly with Others in Organization	-----	Deals with Multiple Constituencies